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HOUSE BILL 169

**49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009**

INTRODUCED BY

Nathan P. Cote

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

AN ACT

RELATING TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH; ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF SAFE HOUSE PILOT PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS EXPERIENCING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISES; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the "Safe House Act".

Section 2. PURPOSES.--The purposes of the Safe House Act are to:

A. offer early intervention services to ensure that a person who needs behavioral health support but does not need hospitalization has access to an appropriate level of such support; and

B. ensure state compliance with federal law requiring that persons with behavioral health needs be cared

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1 for in the least restrictive environment.

2 Section 3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Safe House Act:

3 A. "department" means the human services  
4 department;

5 B. "early intervention services" means services  
6 designed to provide a person, who has behavioral health  
7 disorders and who is experiencing symptoms, a safe, supportive  
8 and affirming home-like residence where the person may  
9 integrate the meaning of what the person is experiencing and  
10 regain equilibrium and the ability to relate effectively to  
11 other people. "Early intervention services" includes peer  
12 support with an emphasis on relationship-building;

13 C. "peer support specialist" means a person who has  
14 previously experienced urgent behavioral health needs and has  
15 recovered and who has successfully completed training  
16 qualifying that person to work with a resident;

17 D. "resident" means an adult who has experienced  
18 urgent behavioral health needs but does not require  
19 hospitalization and who voluntarily lives in a safe house;

20 E. "safe house" means a home-like environment that  
21 offers early intervention services by housing no more than six  
22 voluntary residents who engage in routine activities of daily  
23 living and learn about tools for recovery through experience  
24 and peer support; and

25 F. "short term" means a period of no longer than

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1 twelve weeks.

2 Section 4. PEER SUPPORT TRAINING.--The department shall  
3 provide by rule for training and credentialing of a peer  
4 support specialist; provided that each peer support specialist  
5 shall personally have experienced urgent behavioral health  
6 needs and shall be certified as completing training in de-  
7 escalation techniques, cultural competency, race relations, the  
8 recovery process and avoidance of aggressive confrontation  
9 prior to working at a safe house.

10 Section 5. SAFE HOUSE PROGRAM--ELIGIBILITY.--

11 A. The department shall administer one or more safe  
12 houses in each of the state's four geographic quadrants and one  
13 safe house dedicated to serving the Native American population  
14 in the northwest part of the state, as funds permit, or at  
15 least one safe house site in a rural area on a pilot program  
16 basis.

17 B. A safe house authorized by this section shall  
18 offer early intervention services that:

19 (1) serve residents who are eligible and not  
20 eligible for federal medical assistance programs;

21 (2) are staffed twenty-four hours a day by one  
22 or more peer support specialists;

23 (3) employ a licensed clinician full time and  
24 a psychiatric consultant at least part time;

25 (4) include peer support in helping residents

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1 perform daily public living skills and reentry into independent  
2 living;

3 (5) offer a mix of therapeutic services,  
4 including nontraditional tools for wellness and traditional  
5 behavioral health services; and

6 (6) accept a resident, funds permitting, on a  
7 first-come, first-served basis; provided that no resident shall  
8 live at a safe house except for a short term.

9 C. As early as possible, but within one week of a  
10 resident's departure from a safe house, the resident shall be  
11 introduced by the department to a service provider who may  
12 coordinate care and otherwise provide support for the resident  
13 after the safe house stay ends.

14 Section 6. APPROPRIATION.--Four million one hundred  
15 thousand dollars (\$4,100,000) is appropriated from the general  
16 fund to the human services department for expenditure in fiscal  
17 year 2010 to establish a safe house pilot program in five  
18 communities spread throughout the state as provided in the Safe  
19 House Act. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at  
20 the end of fiscal year 2010 shall revert to the general fund.